

# PLAYING SURFACE IN THE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUES IN SCANDINAVIA

Report: A questionnaire  
survey completed in Norway,  
Sweden and Denmark

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# 1: Background information:

The questionnaire survey regarding the use of different playing surfaces in the professional leagues in Sweden, Norway and Denmark was conducted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September until the 19<sup>th</sup> of September.

In all three countries, the questionnaire was sent out to members of the respective players associations in Norway, Sweden and Denmark that are playing in the three best leagues in each country. In total, this survey was sent out to 1348 players and has been answered by 460 players across Sweden, Norway and Denmark. This results in an overall response rate at 34% across all three countries.

## 1.1: Leagues

The players from the different leagues in each country were represented in following way:

### Norway:

|                    | <b>Respondents</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Eliteserien</b> | 45% (85)           |
| <b>OBOS-ligaen</b> | 37% (70)           |
| <b>Toppserien</b>  | 18% (33)           |
| <b>Total</b>       | 100% (188)         |

In Norway the survey was sent out to a total of 440 players, where 188 answered the questionnaire, which resulted in a response rate at 43%.

### Sweden:

|                            | <b>Respondents</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Allsvenskan</b>         | 40% (62)           |
| <b>Superettan</b>          | 27% (41)           |
| <b>OBOS-Damallsvenskan</b> | 33% (51)           |
| <b>Total</b>               | 100% (154)         |

In Sweden the questionnaire survey was sent out to a total of 420 players, where 154 players answered the questionnaire. This results in a response rate at 36%.

**Denmark:**

|                              | <b>Respondents</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>3F Superliga</b>          | 54 (46%)           |
| <b>NordicBet Ligaen</b>      | 45 (38%)           |
| <b>Gjensidige Kvindeliga</b> | 19 (16%)           |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 100% (118)         |

In Denmark the questionnaire survey was sent out to 488 players, where 118 players answered the questionnaire. This results in a response rate at 24%.

**1.2: Age**

Across the countries the players are mainly in the age range from 19-30 years.

|                            | <b>Denmark</b> | <b>Norway</b> | <b>Sweden</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>18 years or younger</b> | 8%             | 4%            | 1%            |
| <b>19-25 years</b>         | 45%            | 44%           | 31%           |
| <b>26-30 years</b>         | 35%            | 36%           | 46%           |
| <b>31-34 years</b>         | 10%            | 11%           | 19%           |
| <b>35 years+</b>           | 3%             | 5%            | 4%            |
| <b>Total</b>               | 100%           | 100%          | 100%          |

The table above illustrates that in both Denmark and Norway, 80% of the surveyed players are between 19-30 years. The same picture is present in Sweden, where 77% of the surveyed players are in the age range from 19-30 years. This means that across all three countries, 78% of the players are in the age range from 19-30 years.

## 2: Analysis

The survey questionnaire that was sent out in all three countries was identical and consisted of 26 different questions. The questions covered different topics that in general relate to the overall opinion on the use of artificial turf vs. grass turf amongst the best players in Scandinavia. The topics raised were:

1. The debate on the use of artificial turf in Scandinavia
2. The use of artificial turf as match pitches
3. Turf and club choice
4. Turf and injuries
5. Artificial turf and the environment
6. Artificial turf and international football
7. The future of football pitches

Throughout the entire process of developing and releasing the survey, the player's associations in all three countries have cooperated intensely to secure an identical output that would make it possible to compare the results across the countries. The aim has been to secure the highest generalizability, where it becomes possible to give an overall perspective on the attitude towards different playing surfaces among the best players in Scandinavia. The goal is considered to have been successfully achieved, where all three countries have an acceptable response rate, which has made it possible to conclude on a general tendency across Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

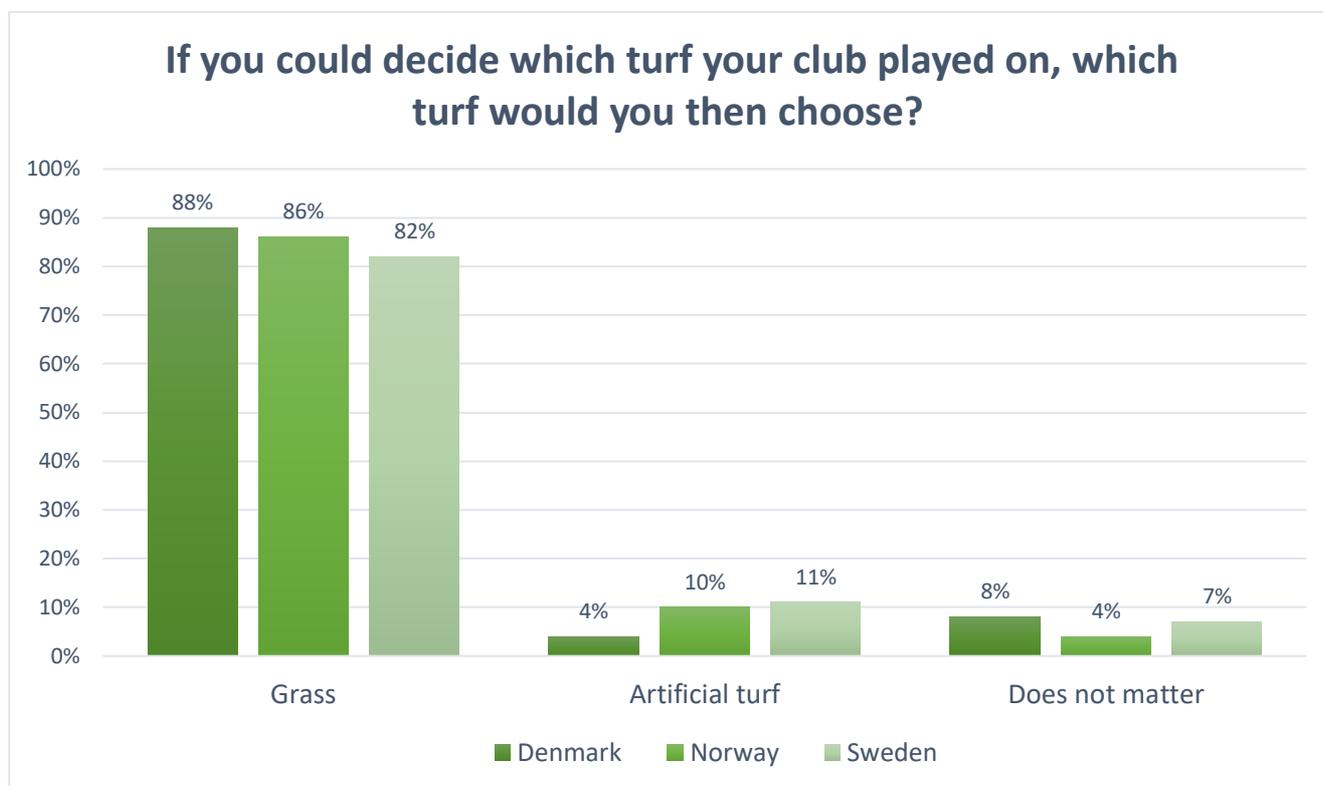
In this report we have focused on nine questions from the survey questionnaire, which encompasses the most important findings in the study. These questions/ topics are essential in order to capture the overall standing point on playing surface among professional football players in Scandinavia.

The nine questions have been categorized into following three topics, which constitute the framework for this report:

1. The player's opinion
2. Turf and injuries
3. The environmental impact of artificial turf and the future of football fields

## 2.1: The player's opinion

### 1: Choice of turf



#### Highlights:

- Across all three countries the vast majority - **85%** - of the surveyed players would choose grass as the turf in their club, if they were able to decide themselves. **9%** of the all the surveyed players would choose artificial turf, while **6%** of the surveyed players states that it does not matter to them.
- **88%** of the surveyed players in Denmark, **86%** in Norway and **82%** of the surveyed players in Sweden would choose grass, if they were able to decide for themselves. In Norway and Sweden 10% and 11% would choose artificial turf, while only 4% of the surveyed players in Denmark would choose artificial turf.

#### Leagues across Scandinavia

##### Denmark:

- In the 3F Superliga and the NordicBet league respectively **89%** and **98%** of the surveyed players would choose grass as the turf their club played on, if they were able to choose themselves. In both men's leagues 0% of the surveyed players would choose artificial turf.

- In contrast, only **63%** of the surveyed players from the best women's league Gjensidige Kvindeliga would choose grass as the turf in their club, if they were able to choose themselves. 26% would choose artificial turf.

#### Norway:

- In the two top men's leagues in Norway, **94%** of the surveyed players in Eliteserien and **91%** in OBOS-league expressed that they would choose grass turf, if they could choose on their own. Only 2% of the Eliteserien players and 4% of the OBOS-league players expressed that they would choose artificial turf.
- Only **55%** of the surveyed players in the best women's league Toppserien expressed that they would choose grass as the turf in their club, if they were able to choose. **42%** would choose artificial turf.

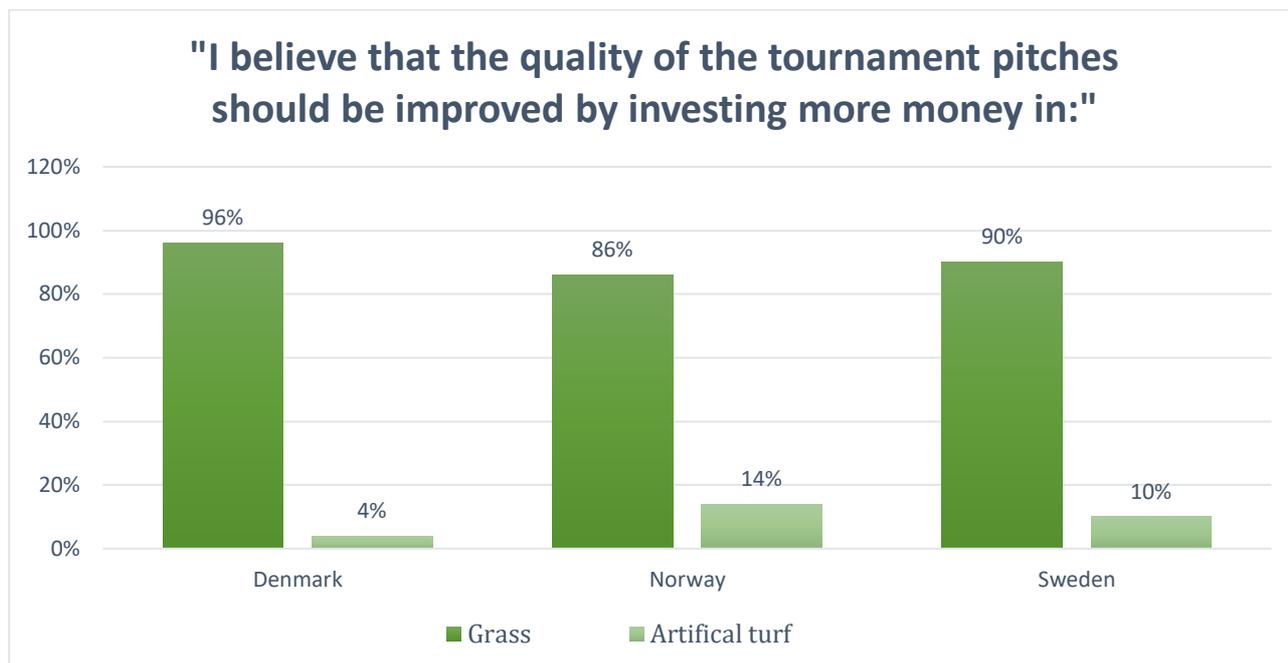
#### Sweden:

- **92%** of the surveyed Allsvenskan players and **95%** of the Superettan players would choose grass as the turf in their club, if they could decide on their own. 2% of the Allsvenskan players would choose artificial turf and this goes for 5% of the Superettan players.
- The same distinction between the female and male players is present in Sweden as in Norway and Denmark: Only **59%** of the surveyed female players in OBOS-Damallsvenskan would prefer grass as the turf in their club. **28%** would pick artificial turf and 14% stated that it does not matter.
- This illustrates that the picture is more blurred amongst the female elite players than among the male elite players.

#### Preliminary conclusion:

- The overall picture clearly states that the professional players in Scandinavia prefer to play on grass turf, if they could decide for themselves.
- This picture is clearest among the male players. The female players across Scandinavia tend to be more in favor of artificial turf, than the male players. The majority of the female players would still prefer grass over artificial turf, if they could choose themselves, but the picture is more muddled.

## 2: Quality of the tournament pitches



### Highlights:

- The graph above illustrates same tendency as the previous question – the players are in favor of grass pitches. Across all three countries, **90%** of the surveyed players would prefer that the quality of tournament pitches was improved by investing more money in grass pitches. Only **10%** of all 460 surveyed players wish that there would be invested more money in artificial turf pitches.
- **96%** of the surveyed players in Denmark, **86%** in Norway and **90%** of the surveyed players in Sweden believe that the quality of tournament pitches should be improved by investing more money in grass pitches.

### Leagues across Scandinavia

#### Denmark:

- **98%** of the surveyed 3F Superliga players and **100%** of the NordicBet league players state that they think there should be invested more money in the quality of grass pitches.
- **79%** of the Kvindeliga players state the same. **21%** of the female Kvindeliga players wish that there should be invested more money in artificial turf.
- There is an overall majority amongst all Danish players wishing that there should be invested more money in the quality of grass pitches. Despite this there is, as with the previous question, a more blurred picture amongst the female players, where a larger number of female players wish to invest more money in artificial turf.

#### Norway:

- **94%** of the surveyed Eliteserien players and **91%** of the surveyed players in the OBOS-league believe that they should be invested more money in grass fields.
- Only **55%** on the female Toppserien players believe that there should be invested more money in grass fields. **46%** believe that there instead should be invested more money in artificial turf. This underlines the same tendency that was shown amongst the Danish female players. Amongst the Norwegian female players, the tendency appears to be even stronger, while it is only a simple majority that wishes to invest more money in grass pitches.

#### Sweden:

- **92%** of the surveyed Allsvenskan-players, **95%** of the Superettan-players and **80%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan-players believe that there should be invested more money in grass pitches.
- Only 2% and 5% of the Allsvenskan and Superettan players believe that there should be invested more money in artificial turf, while **20%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players believe that there should be invested more money in artificial turf.
- The differences between the male and female players in Sweden is very much alike to the differences between female and male players in Denmark. The majority of the female players want to invest more money in the quality of grass pitches, but the picture is still more blurred amongst the female players than the male players.

#### Preliminary conclusion

- Overall the vast majority of the surveyed players in all three countries wish to invest more money in grass fields.
- There is still a distinction between female and male players, though it is less evident. Only around 20% of the female players in Denmark and Sweden wish to invest more money in artificial turf. In Norway the number is significantly higher – 46% of the female players in Toppserien wish to invest more money in artificial turf.

### 3: The debate on the use of artificial turf

| <i>How interesting do you find the debate on the use of artificial turf in professional football?</i> | Denmark | Norway | Sweden |
|---|---------|--------|--------|
| <b>5. Very interesting</b>  | 19%     | 32%    | 33%    |
| <b>4. Interesting</b>   | 47%     | 52%    | 44%    |
| <b>3. Neither interesting/ uninteresting</b>  | 22%     | 13%    | 21%    |
| <b>2. Uninteresting</b>   | 9%      | 2%     | 2%     |
| <b>1. Very uninteresting</b>  | 3%      | 2%     | 1%     |

#### Highlights:

- **77%** of all surveyed players across all three countries find the debate interesting or very interesting. Only **5%** of all players find the debate uninteresting or very uninteresting. **18%** of all players find the debate neither interesting nor uninteresting.
- The country where the players find the debate on the use of artificial turf, the most interesting, is in Norway – **84%** of the surveyed Norwegian players find the debate on the use of artificial turf in professional football interesting or very interesting. This goes for **66%** of the Danish players and **77%** of the Swedish surveyed players.
- Few of all surveyed players across all three countries states that they find the debate uninteresting or very uninteresting – this goes for 12% of the Danish players, 4% of the Norwegian players and 3% of the Swedish players.

#### Leagues across Scandinavia

##### Denmark:

- **65%** of the surveyed Superliga players and **58%** of the NordicBet-league players finds the debate interesting or very interesting. **89%** of the Kvindeliga players find it interesting or very interesting. This illustrates that the debate on the use artificial turf in professional football, is a debate, which the female players in Denmark find the most interesting. Few of the male players find it uninteresting, while 20% of the Superliga players and 29% of the NordicBet-league players finds the debate neither interesting nor uninteresting.

##### Norway:

- Amongst the Norwegian players, the picture is quite different compared to the Danish picture. **84%** of the Eliteserien players, **83%** of the OBOS-league players and **88%** of the Toppserien

players find the debate on the use of artificial turf interesting or very interesting. The interest is still highest amongst the female players, but the distinction between the male and female players is not significantly high.

- The topic is overall a topic that interests the Norwegian players to a very large degree.

#### Sweden:

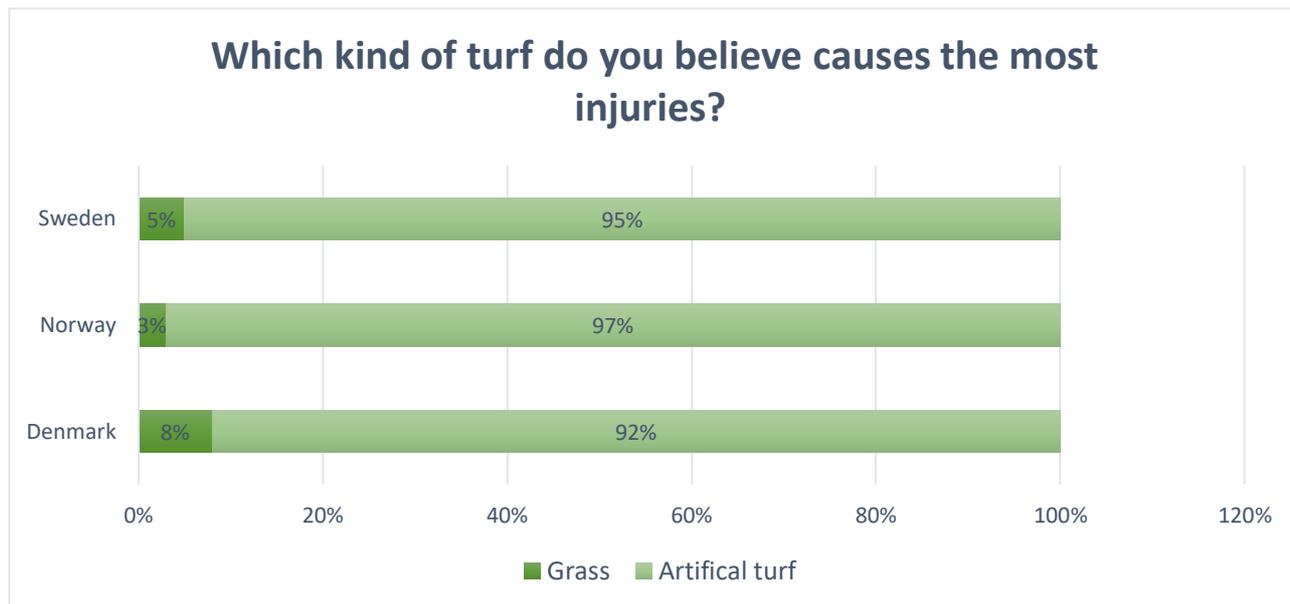
- In Sweden the picture is a bit different compared to Denmark and Norway. In Sweden, the interest for the debate is highest amongst the male players; **82%** of the surveyed Allsvenskan players and **86%** of the Superettan players find the debate interesting or very interesting. This only goes for **63%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players. 35% of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players find the debate neither interesting nor uninteresting. This is the same for 13% of the Allsvenskan players and 15% of the Superettan players. Only 5% of the Allsvenskan players and 2% of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players find the debate uninteresting or very uninteresting.

#### Preliminary conclusion

- Overall, there is a majority of players stating that they find the debate on artificial turf interesting or very interesting. The interest in the debate is highest amongst the Norwegian players. In Denmark the female players find the debate the most interesting, while in Sweden it is the male players that tend to find the debate the most interesting.

## 2.2: Turf and injuries

### 1: Injuries on grass vs. artificial turf



#### Highlights

- The overall picture illustrates that the professional players across Scandinavia to a very high degree believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries – **92%** of the surveyed players in Denmark, **97%** in Norway and **95%** of all the surveyed players in Sweden, meaning that **95%** of all the 460 surveyed players across Sweden, Norway and Denmark believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries. Only **5%** of all surveyed players believe that grass pitches cause the highest amount of injuries.

#### Leagues across Scandinavia:

##### Denmark:

- **93%** of the surveyed 3F Superliga players, **93%** of the NordicBet league players and **84%** of the Gjensidige Kvindeliga players believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries.
- **16%** of the Kvindeliga players believe that grass turf causes the highest amount of injuries. Only 7% of the Superliga and NordicBet league players believe the same. Thereby there is slight attitude difference among the male and female players.

##### Norway:

- The picture is clear – the vast majority across all three surveyed leagues believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries; **98%** of the Eliteserien players, **99%** of the surveyed OBOS-league players and **91%** of the surveyed Toppserien players.

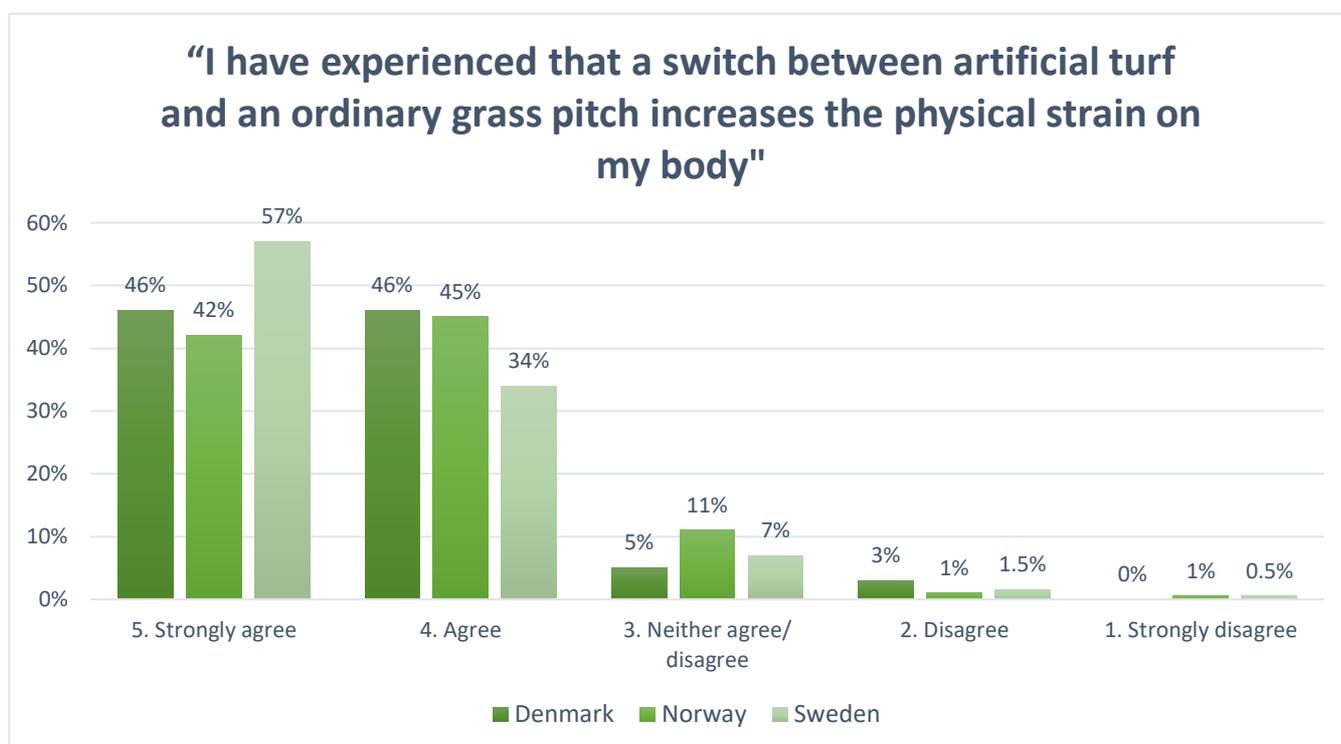
**Sweden:**

- The same picture is present in Sweden as in Denmark and Norway – **92%** of the Allsvenskan players, **95%** of the Superettan players and **98%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries.

**Preliminary conclusion:**

- The overall picture is very clear – the players believe that artificial turf causes the highest amount of injuries. This is illustrated across all leagues in all three countries, despite there being a small attitude difference amongst the Danish male and female players.

**2: Switch between artificial turf and grass turf**



**Highlights**

- The overall tendency illustrates that the vast majority of players agree or strongly agree in having experienced that a switch between artificial turf and grass turf increases the physical strain on their body – **92%** of the Danish surveyed players, **87%** of the Norwegian players and **91%** of the Swedish players agree or strongly agree, which sums up to an overall **90%** of all surveyed players across the three countries that agree or strongly agree. Only **2%** of all players disagree or strongly disagree. **8%** neither disagree nor agree on the matter.

## Leagues across Scandinavia:

### Denmark:

- The picture in Denmark across all three leagues is very clear – **89%** of the surveyed Superliga players, **96%** of the NordicBet-league players and **89%** of the Gjensidige Kvindeliga players agree or strongly agree that a switch between artificial turf and grass increases the physical strain of their bodies.

### Norway:

- The picture across the leagues in Norway is more or less identical to the Danish picture – **86%** of the Eliteserien players, **90%** of the OBOS-league players and **85%** of the Toppserien players agree or strongly agree that a switch between artificial turf and grass increases the physical strain on their bodies.

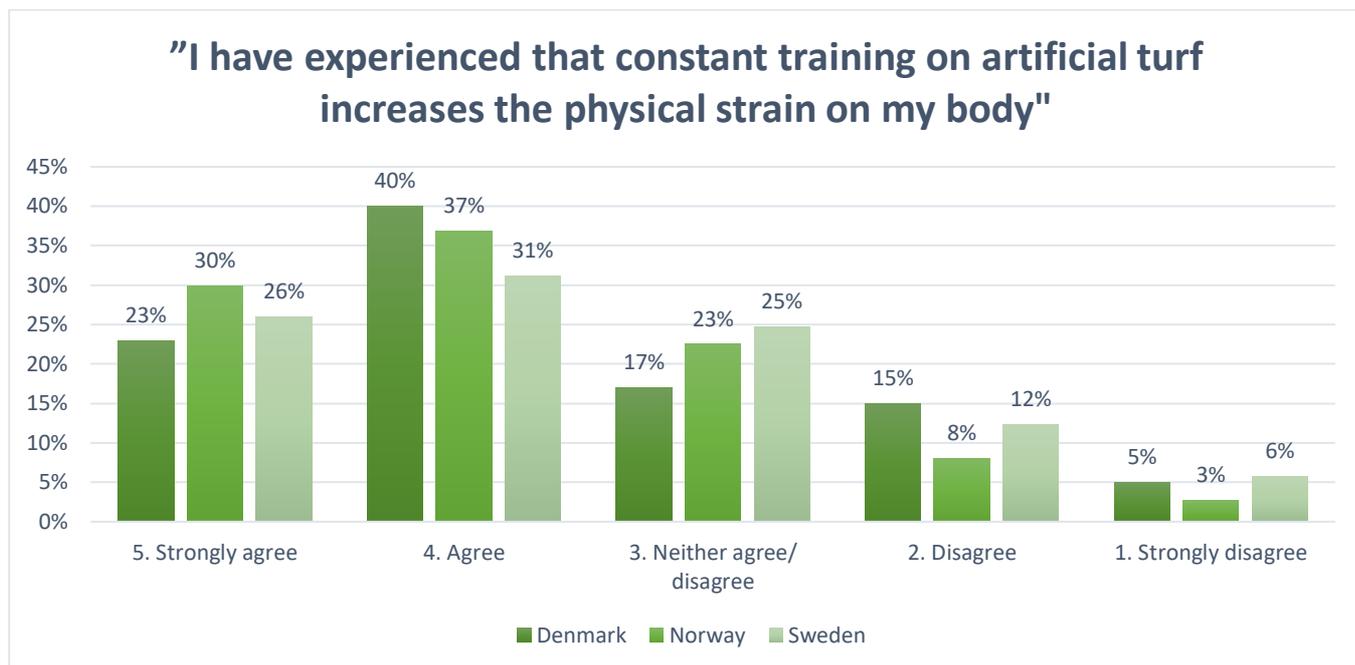
### Sweden:

- The general tendency is verified across the three leagues in Sweden. **94%** of the Allsvenskan players, **86%** of the Superettan players and **92%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players agree or strongly agree that a switch between artificial turf and grass fields increases the physical strain on their body.

## Preliminary conclusion

- The overall picture is very clear – the vast majority of players across leagues in all three countries agrees that a switch between artificial turf and grass fields increases the physical strain on the players body.

### 3: Constant training on artificial turf



#### Highlights

- There is a majority of all players - **63%** - that agrees or strongly agrees that constant training on artificial turf increases the physical strain on their body. Despite this, the overall picture is more blurred when compared to the previous question on switches between grass and artificial turf.
- **16%** disagrees or strongly disagrees on the matter, while **22%** of all players neither agree nor disagree.
- **63%** of the surveyed Danish players, **67%** of the Norwegian players and **57%** of the Swedish players agree or strongly agree that constant training on artificial turf increases the physical strain on their bodies.

#### Leagues across Scandinavia:

##### Denmark:

- There are different attitudes towards this question across the leagues. **59%** of the Superliga players and **74%** of the NordicBet-league players agree or strongly agree that constant training on artificial turf increases the physical strain on their body. 19% of the Superliga players neither disagree nor agree and this also goes for 16% of the NordicBet-league players.
- Only **47%** of the Kvindeliga players agree on this. **37%** disagrees while 16% neither agrees nor disagrees. None of the female players strongly disagree nor strongly agree.
- Amongst the Superliga players there are **22%** that disagrees or strongly disagrees. Amongst the NordicBet-league players there are **11%** that disagrees or strongly disagrees.

#### Norway:

- Like in Denmark, there are different views on this question across the leagues. In the two male leagues there is a vast majority that agrees or strongly agrees – **70%** in the Eliteserien and **74%** in the OBOS-league.
- In the female Toppserien league there are only **46%** of the surveyed players that agree or strongly agree that constant training on artificial turf increases the physical strain on their body. 30% neither agree nor disagree, while **24%** disagree or strongly disagree.
- In the two male leagues it is only **8%** (Eliteserien) and **7%** (OBOS-league) that disagrees or strongly disagrees on the topic.

#### Sweden:

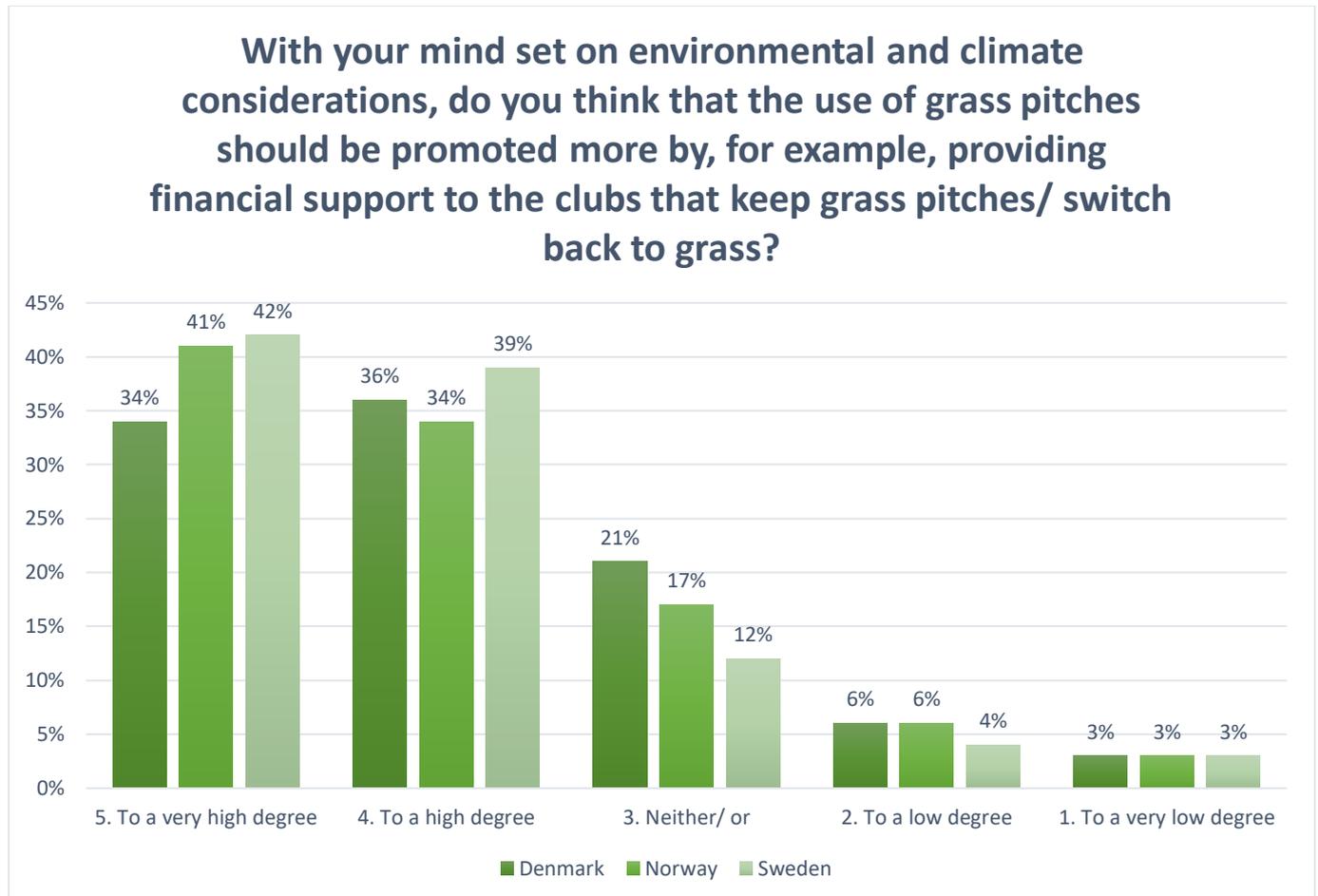
- The same picture is drawn in Sweden as in Norway. **66%** (Allsvenskan) and **65%** (Superettan) of the male players agree or strongly agree that constant training on artificial turf increases the physical strain.
- Only **45%** of the female OBOS-Damallsvenskan players agrees or strongly agrees on this. 31% neither agrees nor disagrees. **24%** of the surveyed female players disagree or strongly disagree.

#### Preliminary conclusion

- There is an overall majority of players expressing that the physical strain on their body increases when they train constantly on artificial turf.
- As with previous questions the picture is more blurred, when we look at the female leagues across Scandinavia. The vast majority of the male players agree or strongly agree that the physical strain is increased as a consequence of constant training on artificial turf. The female player's answers are more spread across the different categories.

## 2.3: The environmental impact of artificial turf and the future of football pitches

### 1: Artificial turf and environmental considerations



#### Highlights

- The general picture shows that the vast majority (**76%**) of players across all countries to a high or very high degree believe that the use of grass pitches should be promoted, when in relation to environmental considerations. Only **8%** of all players believe to a low or very low degree that grass pitches should be promoted in relation to environmental considerations. **16%** states neither/nor.
- **70%** of all Danish players agree to a high or very high degree and the same goes for **75%** of the Norwegian players and **81%** of the Swedish players.

## Leagues across Scandinavia:

### Denmark:

- **67%** of the surveyed Superliga players, **80%** of the NordicBet league players and **53%** of the Kvindeliga players believe to a high or very high degree that the use of grass pitches should be promoted in relation to environmental considerations.
- **37%** of the Kvindeliga players stated neither/nor, and 11% either to a low or very low degree agreed that grass pitches should be promoted. 19% of the Superliga players likewise stated neither/nor and 15% stated either to a low or very low degree that they agreed on the abovementioned statement. The most pro-stated group of players are the NordicBet-league players, where only 2% of the surveyed players to a low or very low degree stated that grass pitches should be promoted in relation to environmental considerations.

### Norway:

- **75%** of the players from the Eliteserien, **80%** of the players from the OBOS-league and **64%** of the players from Toppserien believe that grass pitches to a high or very high degree should be promoted in relation to environmental considerations.
- The picture is clearest among the male players, while the female Toppserien players are more scattered in relation to the question. **27%** of the female players states neither/ nor.

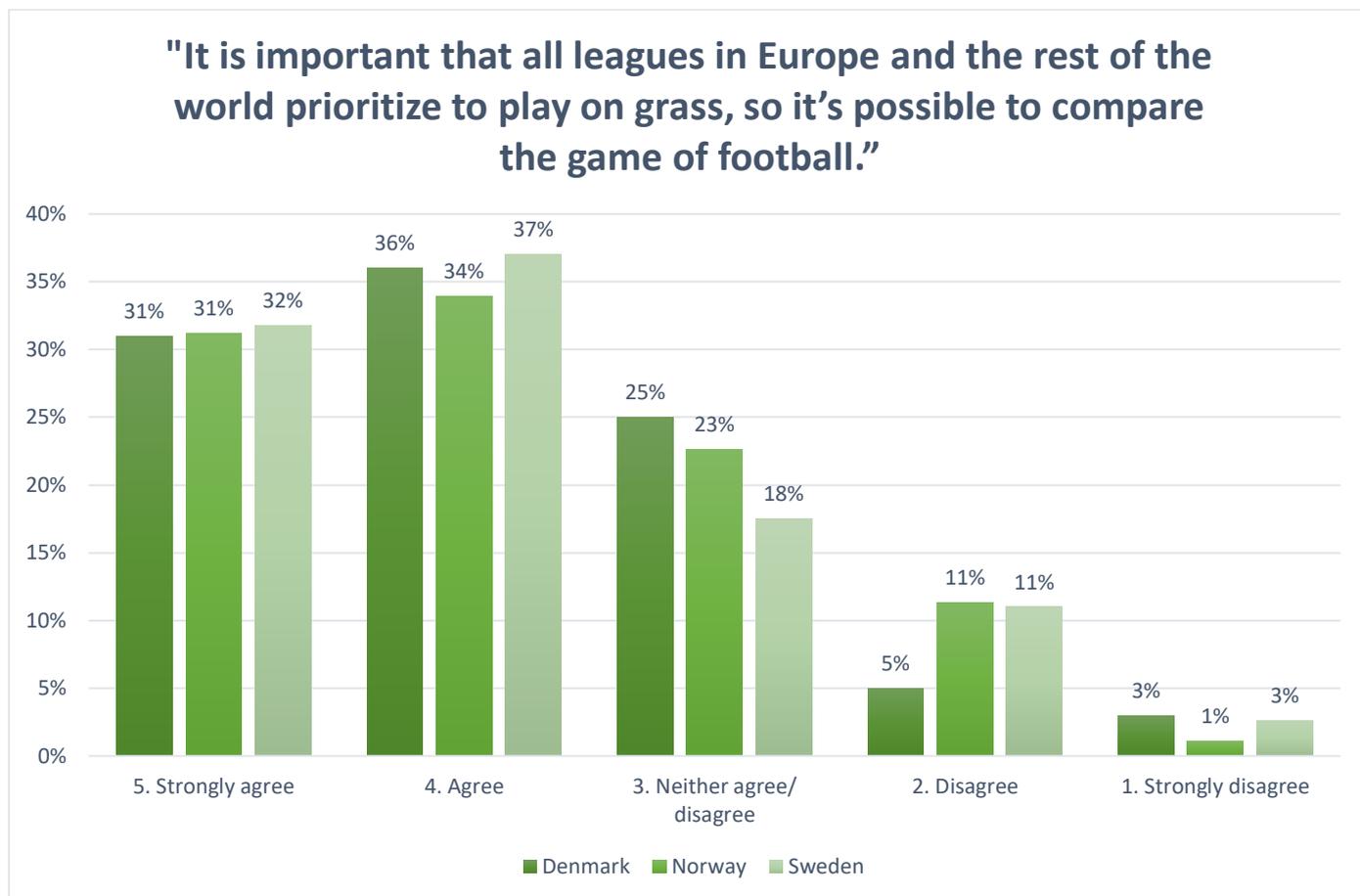
### Sweden:

- The vast majority of all players across the three best leagues in Sweden agree that grass fields should be promoted in relation to environmental considerations – **85%** of the players from Allsvenskan agree to a high or very high degree and the same goes for **88%** of Superettan players and **68%** of the OBOS-Damallsvenskan players.
- **20%** of the surveyed OBOS-Damallsvenskan players states “neither/nor”. The tendency amongst the female players is more blurred, as it was stated amongst the Danish and Norwegian female players as well.

## Preliminary conclusion

- The vast majority of the surveyed players believe that grass pitches should be promoted in relation the environmental considerations.
- The picture is more blurred across the female leagues in Scandinavia, where the female players overall tend to state themselves as being more impartial in relation to the matter.

## 2: Prioritizing turf



### Highlights

- **67%** of all surveyed players across all three countries agree or strongly agree that football should be played on grass internationally in order to compare the game of football. **22%** states that they neither disagree nor agree. **12%** disagrees or strongly disagree on the matter.
- **67%** of the Danish surveyed players, **65%** of the Norwegian surveyed players and **69%** of the Swedish surveyed players agree or strongly agree that it is important that all leagues in Europe and the rest of the world prioritize to play on grass pitches.
- A reasonable number of players neither agree nor disagree and therefore states themselves as being impartial in relation to the topic.

### Leagues across Scandinavia:

#### Denmark:

- **71%** of the Superliga players, **65%** of the NordicBet league players and **63%** of the Kvindeliga players agree or strongly agree that it is important that all leagues internationally prioritize to play on grass pitches in order to compare the game of football across nations. **20%** of the

Superliga players, 27% of the NordicBet-league players and 31% of the Kvindeliga players states neither/nor, which indicates that the players may agree on the question when asked, but in general it isn't necessarily a very important matter for the players.

#### Norway:

- In Norway there is a big divergence between the male and female leagues.
- **77%** and **71%** of the players in the two male leagues – Eliteserien and OBOS-league states themselves as agreeing or strongly agreeing on the matter. The same answers are only stated by **22%** of the surveyed female Toppserien players. **47%** of the female players states that they neither agree nor disagree. **31%** of the surveyed Toppserien players express that they disagree or strongly disagree on the matter.

#### Sweden:

- The same distinction between the male and female leagues can be drawn in Sweden, as in Norway, even though the picture is not as clear as in Norway.
- **81%** and **78%** of the surveyed Allsvenskan and Superettan players agree or strongly agree that all leagues should prioritize to play on grass, in order to make it possible to compare the game of football. Only **47%** of the surveyed OBOS-Damallsvenskan players agree or strongly agree on this. **24%** of the female players states neither/ nor in relation to the question and **30%** disagrees or strongly disagrees on the matter.

#### Preliminary conclusion

- The overall picture shows that a majority of all the surveyed players wish that it would be prioritized to play on grass pitches internationally in order to secure the ability to compare the game of football across nations.
- The picture becomes more blurred when differentiated between the male and female leagues – the male players are more in favor of prioritizing grass pitches than the female players, whom to a higher extend states themselves as being more impartial or directly disagreeing on the matter.

## 4: Conclusion

The findings are clear – the professional players across Scandinavia would choose to play on grass pitches, if they could decide for themselves. 85% of all surveyed 460 players across Sweden, Norway and Denmark would choose grass, if they could, and only 9% would choose artificial turf. The vast majority of the surveyed players furthermore wish that there would be invested more money in grass pitches in order to secure a proper quality of the pitches.

Furthermore, the study has shown, that when you ask professional football players, which turf they believe causes the highest amounts of injuries, they point to artificial turf. 95% of all surveyed players believe this. Frequent turf switches between grass and artificial turf is a parameter that the vast majority of all players point to, as being an element that increases the physical strain on their bodies.

Throughout the entire study, there has been revealed an interesting difference between the professional male and female players. The female players across all three countries are more in favor of artificial turf pitches than the male players are. This indicates clearly that there are differences related to the quality of the grass pitches that the women's leagues in Denmark, Norway and Sweden are playing on in relation to the male league's tournament pitches. Overall, several female players have commented in continuation of this survey questionnaire, that they [female players] are just as willing to play on grass pitches as the male players, but because the quality of the grass pitches that they play on often is so poor, they therefore end up choosing artificial turf over grass pitches. As a Swedish OBOS-Damallsvenskan player states:

*“I think that football should be played on grass, but the problem is that so many of the grass pitches in Damallsvenskan are of such poor quality, which complicates my attitude towards grass pitches” - player in OBOS-Damallsvenskan, Sweden*

Thereby, it seems as if the distinction between the female and male players not is a matter of preferences, but a matter of preferences adjusted to reality.

Overall the study has raised awareness on the opinion on the use of artificial turf pitches amongst the professional players in Scandinavia. The study shows that the professional players overall are more in favor of grass pitches than artificial turf, but at the same time, that it to a very large extent depends on the quality of the pitches. This indicates that we across all three countries need to prioritize the quality of our pitches – and especially our grass pitches, while this is where the players wish to be playing, if they could decide for themselves.